

REMARKS

The amendments to claim 11, and new claims 12- 18 are supported by the specification such as at p. 6, line 20 – p. 8, lines 10. The amendment to claim 7 and Claim 20 finds support at p. 13, lines 13-16.

35 U.S.C. § 103(a) Rejections

Claim 11 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Forrest (U.S. Patent No. 3, 369, 949), and further in view of Audsley (U.S. Patent No. 4,929,403).

As described at column 2, lines 39-50 of Forrest, The basic mold-making method of this invention comprises the following sequential steps: positioning the material being copied flat on a horizontal surface, usually applying a separator to the exposed or top surface of the fabric, removing excess separator from the fabric, applying a high temperature resistant elastomeric material to the fabric, removing substantially all of the entrapped air from the elastomer layer, applying a curing catalyst to this layer, and then applying a backing to the partially cured elastomer layer. After the composite mold has fully cured and/or set, it is separated from the fabric and is generally subjected to a separate heat treatment. . . ”

As further described at column 3, lines 32+, “The fabric material is coated and impregnated with a low making point separator, preferably a low melting wax.” The separator reduces the porosity of the fabric being copies and prevents the mold material from flowing completely into all of the undercuttings of the fabric. Accordingly, when the impregnated fabric is peeled away from the cured mold assembly, the separator is removed concurrently with the fabric. Thus, the separator is not a component of the final mold.

The Examiner acknowledges that Forrest does not teach that the second material (i.e. separator material) is a curable material. The Examiner also acknowledges that Forrest does not teach irradiating (c.g. photocuring) the first and second materials. The Examiner stated that it would be “obvious to include in the method of Forrest the curable molding compositions of Audley.”

According to MPEP 706.02(j), to establish a prima facie case of obviousness, three basic criteria must be met. First there must be some suggestion or motivation in the references

themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art, to modify the references or to combine reference teachings. Second there must be reasonable expectation of success. Finally, the prior art references must teach or suggest all the claim limitations. The teaching or suggestion to make the claimed combination and the reasonable expectation of success must both be found in the prior art and not based on applicant's disclosure.

The Applicant submits that if the separator material of Forrest was replaced with a material that cured and thus formed a permanent bond with the elastomer, the separator material would not serve its intended function, i.e. to allow for separation of the impregnated fabric from the cured elastomer. Accordingly, the motivation to combine the teachings as suggested by the Examiner is not based on the references themselves. Therefore, there is no motivation to combine Forrest with Audley.

Claims 7-10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103 (a) as being unpatentable over Yokoyama et al. (US 2002/007000) in view of Audsley.

As previously explained, neither Audsley nor Yokoyama teach a flexible mold prepared from *two curable compositions having different viscosities* as set forth in Applicant's claims. Accordingly, the combination of references simply does not teach all the claim limitations.

For these reasons, the Applicant submits that a prima facie case of obviousness has not been established. Reconsideration and a timely allowance are respectfully requested.

Please charge any additional fees associated with the prosecution of this application to Deposit Account No. 13-3723. This authorization includes the fee for any necessary extension of time under 37 CFR § 1.136(a). To the extent any such extension should become necessary, it is hereby requested. Please credit any overpayment to the same deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

March 12, 2007

Date

By: /Carolyn A. Fischer/

Carolyn A. Fischer, Reg. No.: 39,091

Telephone No.: 651-575-3915

Office of Intellectual Property Counsel
3M Innovative Properties Company
Facsimile No.: 651-736-3833